

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
290

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with Lee Strobel. I'm sure you have heard of him. Lee once was an atheist and an award winning journalist and investigative reporter for the Chicago Tribune. During his 14 years on the job he won the state's highest honor for public service journalism from the United Press International. While working for the Tribune he also headed a team that won UPI's top award for investigating reporting in Illinois. Lee was converted by examining the case for Christ with the same discipline and rigor that he examined any other case. His no nonsense search for truth is reflected in his books. The long list includes such titles as: *The Case For Christ*, *The Case for Faith*, *The Case for a Creator*, *The Case for Miracles*, *The Case for the Real Jesus*, etc. In 2017 Pure Flix Entertainment released a motion picture describing Strobel's journey from atheism to faith.

Today's letter will focus on how the personal testimony of Ron Bronski helped open Lee's mind to the reality of Christ. Ron was a member of a street gang in Chicago who shot a rival gang member for beating up his brother. When Ron heard about his brother's beating he got a gun and pursued his victim with deadly intent. Ultimately Ron chased him down and shot him in the back. He then rolled him over, put the gun to his head, and pulled the trigger. When the gun jammed and didn't fire, Ron dropped it and ran. FYI Wikipedia reports that in 2019 there were 2,160 shooting victims in Chicago (1,643 injured and 517 killed). Most of these crimes are never solved. I mention this because even though there was a warrant out for Bronski's arrest, no serious attempt was made to find him. So Ron merely picked up his girl friend and left town for Portland, Oregon.

In Oregon Ron got a job, married his girl friend, and blended in with society. The "problem" was that Ron worked with several Christians who led him to Christ. Ron was now a Christian and a model citizen. But he was home free! There was no way the Chicago police would find him. His conscience, however, began to bother him. Jesus was now the Lord of his life and Ron became convinced that Jesus wanted him to turn himself in. So he kissed his wife and children good bye, took his hard earned money, and bought a train ticket for Chicago.

At the time of his trial, atheist Lee Strobel was assigned by the Tribune to cover the story. Used to hearing guilty people game the system and look for loop holes, Lee was amazed to hear Ron tell the judge: *"I did it. I'm guilty because not only did I shoot him, I was trying to kill him. But I have become a Christian since, and now I realize that what I did was wrong. I'm sorry for what I did"*.

After hearing this testimony, Lee confessed that Ron's transparency and sincerity "drew me towards Christ". There was something genuine about Ron's faith that shined like a diamond on black velvet. Apparently something significant and real made Ron leave his wife and children and risk 20 years in prison when he didn't have to.

Something similar happened to Saul of Tarsus when he saw Stephen die. Instead of cowering in fear, the face of Stephen was radiant like that of an angel (Acts 6:15). As the wicked mob was stoning Stephen to death he fell to his knees and cried out: **"Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60)**. Saul, the unbeliever, was consenting to his death and even holding the garments of those who killed him. Yet Saul sensed that there was something genuine and real about Stephen's faith. He could not escape from the haunting memory of Stephen's last moments praying for the forgiveness of those who were killing him. When Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus He said: **"Saul, Saul,**

why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads” (Acts 26:14). Perhaps the testimony of Ron Bronski was goading Lee Strobel just as the testimony of Stephen was goading Saul.

Miraculously, Ron was not sentenced to prison but was permitted to return to his family in Oregon. In 1990 he established the Song of Hope Church in Portland and today continues to serve Christ as a Christian pastor. Saul too, as you know, also made a dramatic change in his life and became a preacher.

The story of Lee Strobel and Ron Bronski presents a teachable moment. It stresses the importance behaving faithfully in every circumstance. Someone quipped: “If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?”

Let us therefore endeavor to be faithful in every circumstance as Ron Bronski and Stephen were. God is watching us whether anyone else is or not!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce